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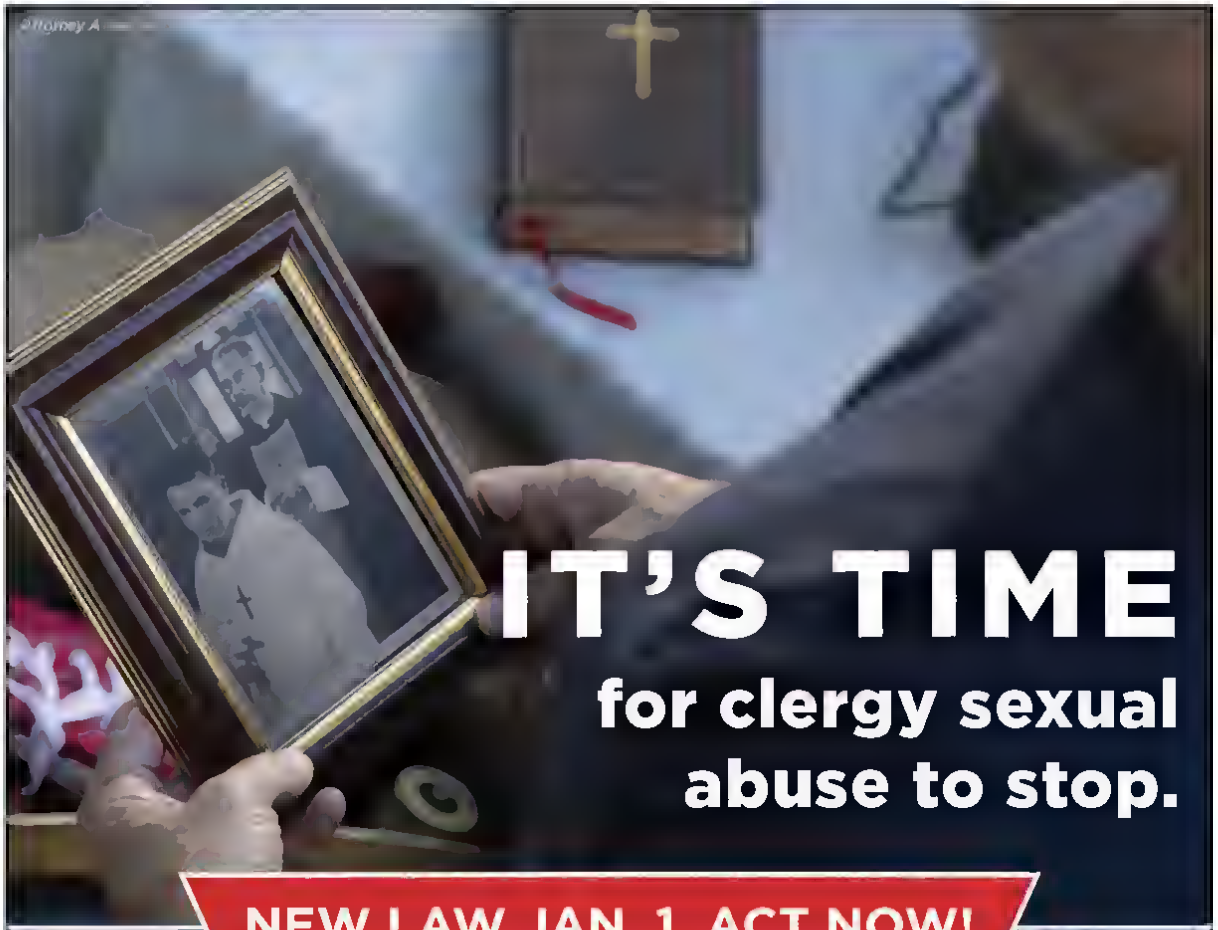

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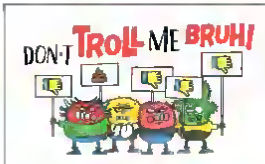

"Super strange. The DA is going to free likely predators just because he doesn't like the previous DA. Reminds me of a supermarket tabloid. Feel sorry for whoever has to write stuff like this for a career."
—*Jeff Roe, commenting on R. Scott Moxley's "DA's Office Worked to Frame Newport Beach Doctor as Serial Rapist" (Nov. 13)*
We respond: Don't cry for me, Argentina

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'I Can't Breathe'

Jury awards record $13.2 million in Anaheim police in-custody-death case

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A jury in Los Angeles awarded $13.2 million on Nov. 20 to the children of Vincent Valenzuela, a 32-year-old man who died following an encounter with Anaheim police in 2016.

The decision came after the jury found on Nov. 18 that officers Daniel Wolfe and Woojin Jun had acted negligently and used unreasonable force in the incident (see my report "Homeless Man Left in Coma After Encounter with Anaheim Police," July 4, 2016). The award is the largest ever in a civil case involving Anaheim police and an in-custody death.

On July 2, 2016, Wolfe and Jun responded to a call about a man who had been pacing in front of a home in West Anaheim. They followed Valenzuela into a nearby coin laundromat and began questioning him, then a violent altercation ensued.

"The police tracked Valenzuela down—I hate to say it—like a wild animal and killed him," says Garo Mardirossian, an attorney representing Valenzuela's two children. "There was no serious crime that he committed. The only thing they heard was a meth pipe break."

Inside the laundromat, the officers used a "carotid restraint" hold on Valenzuela, but he broke free, even after being Tased. He kicked Wolfe in the chest and ran across the street to a 7-Eleven after avoiding a roundhouse kick. Police caught up with Valenzuela at the convenience store's parking lot. They got him to the ground and Wolfe re-applied the hold.

Valenzuela became unresponsive during the arrest. He suffered three heart attacks on the way to West Anaheim Medical Center and never recovered from being in a comatose state. The family decided to end life support eight days later (see my story "Homeless Man Left in Coma After Encounter with Anaheim Police Dies," July 10, 2016).

The original incident drew comparisons to Kelly Thomas, the homeless man killed in a violent encounter with Fullerton police in 2011. Both men died on July 10, five years apart. Mardirossian won a $4.9 million settlement for the Thomas family in that civil case. Anaheim offered to settle the Valenzuela case, but for a paltry sum. "We said, 'No, we'll let a jury decide,'" Mardirossian explains.

Physical evidence became pivotal in the trial. Attorneys for the city tried to argue in opening statements that no real evidence showed Valenzuela suffering a broken hyoid bone in the anterior neck region, much less as a result of the carotid neck hold applied by police. The family's attorneys questioned key witnesses about the injury, including Dr. Aruna Singhania, a forensic pathologist with the Orange County coroner's office. She showed the jury pictures of the broken hyoid bone and the hemorrhaging around it, dashing any notion that it could've been broken during the autopsy.

"If that bone breaks, that means you have not properly applied the carotid hold," says Mardirossian, calling it "signature" evidence.

Attorneys Dale Galipo, Lawrence Marks and Douglas Lunde joined Mardirossian in the case. The legal team called Bennet Omalu, a world-renowned forensic pathologist, to testify during the trial. Not only did Omalu back up the physical evidence, but he also medically explained Valenzuela's slightly enlarged heart that the defense tried to say had been caused only by meth abuse. Omalu testified that being on life support for several days will also cause organs to enlarge.

The jury awarded $11.4 million to Valenzuela's son, now 13, and $1.8 million to his 8-year-old daughter.

"We respectfully disagree with the decision and believe the judgment is unwarranted," Anaheim spokesman Mike Lyster said. "Our officers responded to a family's call for help and took measured, reasonable actions in dealing with someone intent on resisting, fighting and getting away."

The Orange County district attorney's office declined to press charges against the policemen in 2017 (see "OCDA: No Charges for Anaheim Police in Suffocation Death of Homeless Man," Sept. 28, 2017). A few months later, the agency publicly released body-camera footage and surveillance video of the encounter (see "OCDA Release Body Camera Video of Man's Fatal Encounter with Anaheim PD," Dec. 1, 2017). By Mardirossian's count, there were 12 cries for help and six "I can't breathe" pleas from Valenzuela before he became unresponsive. Toward the end of the encounter, Sergeant Daniel Gonzalez arrived on scene and supervised the carotid restraint hold Wolfe applied. The attorney says all three officers had martial-arts training, but Valenzuela still ended up dying from complications of asphyxia.

Even with a record award being handed out by a jury for an in-custody-death civil case, the city of Anaheim stands by its officers. "Any loss of life in our city is tragic, and we are the first to take a critical look at any encounter," says Lyster. "We have done so and believe our officers acted in the best interest of public safety. Ultimately, this incident speaks to the devastating impacts of drugs on people, families and communities."

With Anaheim police now under the helm of chief Jorge Cisneros, Mardirossian believes the outcome of the Valenzuela case ought to provoke key policy changes. "They should follow the Los Angeles Police Department's lead and basically ban any kind of neck hold unless in a use-of-deadly-force situation," he says. "Otherwise, it's too lethal and is very difficult to apply."

GSANROMAN@OCWEEKLY.COM

» GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Very Important Parkgoer

Lines at Disneyland? Leave that to the mouse-eared plebs! Skip past them with walk-up access to popular attractions even on the most crowded days. That's the privileged experience offered by Disneyland Resort VIP tours, which start at $2,975 for a minimum of seven hours with up to 10 friends. And according to one former cast member-turned-author, it's a peek into how the world of wealth changed the American Dream.

Before brokering huge financial mergers and starting a Silicon Valley private-equity firm, Chrstopher Varelas worked at Disneyland's Café Orleans in the 1980s. He returned for a family fun day and recounted the VIP treatment in his new book, *How Money Became Dangerous: The Inside Story of Our Turbulent Relationship With Modern Finance*.

In an excerpt published in *Business Insider*, Varelas admits to feeling a "pang" of guilt when entering Pirates of the Caribbean through its exit while others suffered in a humid queue. A cor clerge guided his group as they enjoyed all the rides within six hours. Varelas' family was even treated to front-row parade seats at the park—without having to claim a curb for more than an hour beforehand.

"The Disney VIP hostess is just one manifestation of a growing societal trend," writes Varelas. "As increasing numbers of people become wealthy, they look to spend that wealth, accumulating all the material things one could want. But what to do with their excess wealth? More and more often, they spend it on better access—the other line."

For him, that desire for exclusivity and access comes in many forms—including the recent college-admissions scandal. It's a yearning, Varelas says, that has usurped old-timey values of merit.

Giving a simpler view, *PopSugar* published a story last year on whether VIP tours were worth it. Breaking down the cost by guest, came out to quite a bit more than the $100 someone would pay for a single park ticket on a busy day. With prices as they are now, the VIP tour averages out to $297.50 per person in a 10-member group.

But at what cost to the American Dream?

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BOB AUL

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BREA KING

Is Dwight Manley the former oil town's native son savior or its mad monarch?

By Gabriel San Román
Photography by Federico Medina

The Reverend Jesse Jackson, once a young apprentice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and who later ran "Rainbow Coalition" campaigns for president in the 1980s, showed up before the Brea City Council on Oct. 1 at the invitation of Dwight Manley, a businessman who owns much of the city's downtown. In the area to celebrate his 78th birthday, the subject of 1980s "Run Jesse Run!" fever gave an unscheduled invocation at the start of the meeting.

"I'm really here as a friend of Dwight," Jackson said. "He wanted me to see this marvelous City Council in Brea."

The reverend followed with brief words of prayer in the name of reconciliation everywhere. "We turn to each other, not on each other," said Jackson. "We ask Brea to be that light in darkness." After a quick, understated "amen," he shuffled back to his seat.

Later, Manley saw himself as just such a luminary in opposing Brea acquiring Birch Hills Golf Course, deeming it a toxic dumpsite, as Jackson looked on from a few rows back. "You're basically taking on Three Mile Island in the middle of Brea," Manley warned the council. "I used to walk that golf course [and] licked golf balls as a child. Maybe I got cancer from that. I don't know. You should not touch it!"

Manley left certain there wouldn't be so much as even a vote on Birch Hills, as he had met with two council members over the issue that morning. He had already retreated to the Yard House restaurant in downtown Brea when his phone started lighting up with text messages. The council voted 4-0 with one recusal in favor of taking on the property and keeping it an executive 18-hole course.

"I didn't even come to my office for two days after that," Manley says as he leans back in his desk chair a couple of weeks after the vote. "I had a migraine, and it was literally like the heart was ripped out of me."

Raised in Brea, Manley's return to his hometown veered through an assemblage of extraordinary life experiences. He's an accomplished rare-coin collector, a former sports agent to NBA greats, a property owner and—as Manley found out thanks to a DNA kit given as a Christmas gift two years ago—the biological son of Mike Antonovich, who served 34 years on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors as a Republican.

But it's Manley's own outsized political profile in Brea—a small city of 43,000 residents—that has the town talking, albeit in hushed tones. In the past five years, he has put his wealth into supporting City Council candidates, reshaped the balance of power at City Hall, hung giant-sized political banners from his properties, tried to start a local newspaper and taken his civic crusades to the Nextdoor private social network, from which he's been banned multiple times.

To Manley's detractors, he is an oligarch involved in damn near every facet of Brea's civic life. "City Council is beholden to him, while at the same time afraid of him," says John Koos, a former Brea Chamber of Commerce chairman and onetime planning

SCREENSHOT FROM CITY COUNCIL MEETING

commissioner. "That fear permeates the entire bureaucracy."

Others count him as a Brea blessing beyond downtown. "He cares about Brea," says Rick Clark, the Manley-friendly scribe behind the Brea Matters blog. "People vilify him, and it's uncalled-for. There's not a week that goes by that he doesn't put sometimes several thousands of dollars into the community in donations."

The future of a golf course appearing to be Manley's chosen hill to die on seems politically perplexing. But it's a vote consequential enough to have him rethink his future in Brea, though not without also contemplating the political future of those whom he believes wronged him—and, of course, the city.

"I'm telling you one thing: The word *recall* is going to be brought into the Brea landscape in the next 12 months," Manley vows. "This is not going to wait two or four years for certain people."

An outspoken man with famous friends, Manley recalls a shy childhood during his days at Brea's Laurel Elementary School. Early on, he struck up a hobby that would prove fortuitous. "I found a 1909 cent in a coffee can when I was 6 and was fascinated by it," he says. Soon, Manley befriended a fellow coin collector who hipped him to a shop downtown he hadn't been to. There, he only became further immersed.

"Coins were everything," says Manley. "It was like Fantasyland."

When Manley graduated from Brea Olinda High School in 1984, he moved out, skipped going to college and continued life as a budding numismatist. "When I graduated, I had $5,000 to my name," he says. "I drove cross-country for a job that paid me $20,000 a year. I didn't inherit money. I have never been given anything."

Within five years, Manley became a millionaire. Self-made. At age 23.

A friendship with NBA legend Dennis Rodman forged at a Las Vegas casino by a mutual acquaintance led to a seemingly unlikely career shift in 1995. "Dennis, who I was friends with for two years at the time, asked me to help him make some money one summer," says Manley. "Dennis had black hair when I met him, and then I have him in a wedding gown on Fifth Avenue."

Manley managed Rodman during his infamous *Bad As I Wanna Be* book tour, as the "Worm" morphed his persona partly through flamboyant fashion that *GQ* now hails as prophetic. The following year, Manley became Rodman's sports agent and enjoyed a clientele that grew to include such premier NBA talents as Karl Malone, Doug Christie and Vernon Maxwell.

Through representing Rodman, Manley met Jackson. The reverend married Manley and his now-ex-wife in 1999. He and Jackson traveled to Ghana in 2007 to celebrate the African nation's 50th anniversary of freedom from British colonial rule. "He represented the people without a voice and the oppressed," says Manley. "In Brea, I have a voice here. I use it for the people that I feel are getting screwed."

But palling around with Jackson didn't lead Manley back to Brea.

That journey began at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean off the Carolina coast with the sunken spoils of the *S.S. Central America*, the fabled "Ship of Gold." It took Manley nearly two years to pull off the purchase of most of the ill-fated 1857 voyage's recovered treasure, but once he did, an estimated value of more than $100 million made it the largest numismatic acquisition in the world.

"It's the greatest loss of treasure in American history," Manley told Coin Television last year during an expo in Long Beach. "It came from the California Gold Rush."

The yield becoming profitable allowed Manley to get into real estate. When his mortgage broker brought three properties on Birch Street in downtown Brea to his attention, Manley originally passed. Six months later, though, he changed his mind and purchased them for $13 million. "Hometown Kid Invests Wealth in Brea," read the headline of a glowing 2003 *Los Angeles Times* profile.

"As time went on, other properties came up for sale, and I got the calls," says Manley. "One by one, I started buying all the pieces on the *Monopoly* board, basically." He owns most of downtown Brea and moved back to the city in 2012, into the northern hills compound he calls home.

"I love Brea because it's my roots," says Manley, now 53. "You're only from one place."

A coffee table in Manley's downtown office is covered with cards that he receives from the elderly who thank him for his monthly donations to Brea's Senior Center. From his desk, he turns to retrieve a framed photo showing Karl "The Mailman" Malone posing with Brea police in celebration of defibrillators donated to them by his former NBA agent. Plaques commemorate feature articles in major publications about his storied life.

But the political tale of the past five years in Brea remains largely untold.

When returning to live and work in Brea, he counts a major mistake in not making any political waves earlier. "I didn't speak out when Tim O'Donnell was the city manager because I was being manipulated," says Manley. "He ruled with an iron fist. I probably would've never gotten the downtown turned around had I done that then."

A "family-friendly" downtown with a good mix of entertainment, retail and dining became ground zero for a political dispute that soon arose around its next puzzle piece: a $13 million parking structure behind the old Tower Records building.

Mayor Brett Murdock, who won election in 2010, became Manley's first big political target, as he called him "dishonest" and "bad" for Brea. He made it a priority to ensure voters wouldn't return Murdock to the dais in 2014—a political ambition that put him at odds with Koos, a former acquaintance of Manley's who helped to elect the mayor.

"Dwight and I were actually very copa-

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

MANLEY IN HIS DOWNTOWN BREA OFFICE

BREA KING

» FROM PAGE 9

setic," says Koos. "He wrote checks to many people but didn't really jump in and try to affect the outcome of elections. To this day, I think it was about the parking structure. Murdock and some of the previous council members had the position that the downtown business owners should pay for some of it."

The late City Councilman Roy Moore called for a "clean sweep" to shake up City Hall. Aside from contributing $25,000 (mostly through the California Homeowners Association Political Action Committee) to ensure the sweep, Manley debuted a more readily visible tactic, hanging huge anti-Murdock banners from his properties.

The election results proved devastating for Murdock. While non-incumbants Cecilia Hupp, Glenn Parker and Steve Vargas easily claimed victory, the incumbent mayor placed a distant fourth, earning just 13.7 percent of the vote.

"A sitting mayor going away?" says Manley. "That's a phenomenon. The people spoke, and we got a clean sweep."

In September 2015, Brea city council approved spending up to $10.3 million on the parking structure project, a mix of 2011 bond and community benefit and economic development funds. Final financing included a $2.9 million loan from the general fund. Critics called the vote a sweetheart subsidy to downtown, a consummation of pay-to-play politics.

Manley denies that he bought a council majority to gain a free parking structure. "I didn't pay anybody," he says. "Parker voted against it, and I gave him more money than anybody. If everybody that donates to somebody is guilty if something goes their way, then politics is permanently ruined."

But a review of campaign filings provided by Brea show Parker received the least Manley-related contributions; California Homeowners Association PAC spent no money in support of his candidacy.

In 2018, Brea voters had the opportunity to re-evaluate the clean sweep. Bill Hall, a former Brea Olinda Unified School District trustee, ran for a council seat as a self-funded candidate who'd been critical of the use of general-fund money to finance the four-story, 476-space garage. "How does the City Council give up money like that without understanding the financial-payback time and the impact to their community?" Hall asked. "The idea that it has helped can't be proven."

The Brea Chamber of Commerce endorsed Hall, as it did Hupp, but only Hall's nod came under attack by Brea Matters. Downtown business owners turned up the heat on the chamber for Hall's supposedly anti-business stance on the parking structure. "You create a narrative, a false one," says Hall. "You say it loud and often, and people begin to accept it. It's better to never be questioned and be seen as the omnipotent Wizard of Oz than to actually have somebody willing to say, 'Listen, we ought to look behind the curtain.'"

Only Hall didn't get that chance. All won re-election, with Hall placing a distant fifth at 12.7 percent.

COURTESY OF DWIGHT MANLEY

RODMAN AGAINST MEASURE K GETTING OKAYED

Heading into the 2018 elections, Manley had another mission in mind: reviving local journalism to educate Brea voters. Financial troubles caused the *Orange County Register* to fold the already-merged *Brea/La Habra Star-Progress* the previous year. Manley saw a void in Brea's civic culture and decided to do something about it. The opinionated developer registered Brea News LLC with the California Secretary of State's office on June 15, 2018. He readied an inaugural issue with Editor-in-Chief Daniel Langhorne, a former *Register* reporter. The name of the new bi-monthly community paper: *Brea/king News*.

"I was becoming an investigative journalist digging into things that, in the past, newspapers would've been on," says Manley of the impetus behind the project. "The council and school board are voting on things that they personally have no idea about. They're 100 percent dependent on staffs who have their own agendas."

Others saw the effort as just another power play to control the narrative with an all-too-telling double entendre in "Brea King." But they didn't have an opportunity to flip through the paper to confirm their suspicions. A dispute between the owner and the editor halted *Brea/king News*' July 4, 2018, launch, leaving it with the ironic tagline "Where journalism never dies."

"It was not editorial at all," says Manley. "I did not believe Langhorne was the right person for what was happening."

Langhorne didn't respond to a *Weekly* request for comment.

The never-distributed debut featured stories about park projects, high-school sports and, of course, a front-pager on Manley as the man behind the paper. Clark penned one of the guest columns as an in-kind contribution. Years before *Brea/king News*, the longtime public-relations-industry veteran started the Brea Matters blog in 2011, drawing his inspiration from Moore, a 16-year councilman who passed away in 2015. In Clark's opinion, Brea's "old guard" is the problem. "Once they leave office, they play kingmaker," he says, cryptically. "They know who they are."

Brea Matters touts that there are "two sides to every story." Lately, it champions Manley's various causes, owing its biggest hits to his open letter to the school board in September about its health-insurance benefits. "Manley emailed a [link] to his father," says Clark. "Mike was proud of his son and proud of his work and shared it with people on his email list, and it exploded. That's pretty unusual for a little blog about Brea."

Just like his *Brea/king News* column, Clark says his blog runs all on his dime and that its pro-Manley bent doesn't come with any strings attached, financial or otherwise. "Dwight and I share a common goal of making Brea a better place to live," says Clark. "There's been a number of times we've butted heads, but we work it out. It's a good relationship."

About two dozen teachers, parents and students gathered in front of Brea City Hall on the evening of Nov 18. They had donned red shirts in support of public education and held signs reading "Let Brea Vote" and, "Brea isn't a Monarchy" before filing into the City Council meeting, where the fate of trustee health-insurance benefits and a $123 million bond being put on the ballot would be decided. Jodi Balma, a Brea resident, parent and Fullerton College political-science professor, helped to organize the rally.

"Without board members Carrie Flanders or Paul Ruiz allowing the bond to go to a vote, they have, in essence, crowned Dwight Manley king of Brea schools," said Balma before the meeting. "I know he doesn't want the kingmaker title, but he has a crown on his head."

It's not the first school-bond battle for Balma. In 2016, she joined the Measure K campaign, a $148 million bond effort hoping to allocate funding to repair Brea classrooms, make school sites earthquake-prepared and retain teachers. "When it rains, my kids have seven or eight buckets on the desks because there's so many leaks," says Balma. "When my daughter was in kindergarten, one of the kindergarten rooms was shut down because of mold."

She didn't anticipate an entrenched, well-organized opposition, one that included Manley prominently in its ranks.

True to form, Manley dropped a huge anti-Measure K banner from the backside of his downtown office building during the campaign. That year, he also founded Brea First in Moore's "clean sweep" spirit. "Brea First was intended to identify experts in areas of government and to share that knowledge with citizens so they may form intelligent decisions," says Glenn Vodhanel, a Brea First board member. For Measure K, the group hosted a presentation by Will Swaim, the *Weekly* founding editor who's now with the pro-charter schools, anti-union California Policy Center.

In reminiscing on the fight, Manley scrolls through his phone before showing a picture of Rodman holding a sign in downtown opposing the bond. "I spent $900 to oppose that measure," says Manley. "They spent a quarter of a million, but the people spoke."

The anti-Measure K camp did try to overstate their case. Former California State Treasurer Joho Chiang sued them over a "false and misleading" partial quote plucked from a press release that year of him saying school bonds "do nothing but inflate taxpayer bills and reduce resources for students." A judge ordered the Orange County Registrar of Voters to immediately delete the sentence from the Argument Against Measure K signed off on by Manley and others; it would've otherwise appeared on official voter guides and sample ballots.

A slim majority of Breans voted against Measure K, which set the stage for the current effort to put a bond on the ballot next year, one that came with an unexpected hurdle at the board.

At the Nov 18 meeting, a chance to break the impasse arrived, albeit through addition by subtraction. Flanders spoke in support of nixing health benefits and linked it to the viability of the bond passing. "We need to fight for our district's needs, which benefit the entire community, [and] not make it about a person," she said. "I just want to give up benefits and let's get this thing done." Alongside Flanders and board president Gail Lyons, trustee Nicole Coloo accepts health insurance from the district.

Since Lyons and Colon take cheaper benefits, the annual cost to the district is less than the $120,000 maximum figure cited by Flanders. An increasingly tense exchange between Colon and Flanders took place before trustee Keri Kropke interjected.

"This is a hostage situation," she said. "A very wealthy man has tied benefits to this bond issue. I don't like being extorted. And yet, I want our schools to be modernized."

After a spell of silence, Kropke became the third swing vote to kill board-member health benefits by 2022. The moment left much of the audience shell-shocked. Soon after, the board unanimously voted to put the bond on the ballot, and a sense of relief finally washed over Flanders' flustered face.

A Wall of Honor plaque hangs at the Brea Museum and Historical Society. Manley's name tops all contributors as a benefactor who has donated more than $100,000. Inside its exhibitions, the tale of Babe Ruth swatting home runs during a baseball game in town on Halloween night 1924 is well-told. Manley believes Jackson's visit and invocation before the City Council in October will be similarly regarded in time. "This, in a hundred years, will be a big thing," he says. Only, the council apparently didn't appreciate the moment before them.

"I was embarrassed that the council members and staff—not one of them—said, 'thank you,'" Manley says. "Unbelievable." Mayor Christine Marick did give thanks moments after Jackson concluded his invocation.

Tiff aside, the council meeting Jackson attended and the Birch Hills vote may more immediately influence Brea's political future and Manley's long-term commitment to downtown. He wants to revive a dormant Brea First and remains hopeful that *Bread/ong News* will finally launch one day. "If I'm making a difference, I want to give my all," says Manley. "If I can't make a difference, that's a different question, and that's where we're at today."

He counts Birch Hills alongside the downtown parking structure as the fights that turned him around politically in Brea, calling the former a "giant fraud." Earlier this decade, traces of arsenic and other contaminants had been found on the golf-course site. Arsenic was dug up and replanted beneath a parking lot that Chevron owns on-site. Highly concentrated polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, were also removed.

Bre a stands to make $300,000 to $400,000 per year by keeping Birch Hills as a golf course. And if the city ever needed a zoning change, it's not impossible, but it would require approval from a regulatory agency and Chevron under the tight agreement.

Hupp did ask questions about the land's potential value for housing development, but the council didn't do its due diligence, Manley says as he turns visibly irate.

"They could have sold the back nine and collected $79 million just for that," he says. "Because it's a toxic dumpsite and the center was kept by Chevron, and they re-dumped all the shit in the middle, it's for all intents and purposes way too expensive to remediate to make any money off it ever! I was devastated seeing our guardians—four of them—screw Brea. They need to pay for that. They need to never be in charge again!"

Manley denies having any desire to pursue a mixed-use development there, especially with his Mercury housing project expected to go before the planning commission next year. A proposed Hampton Inn hotel is also in the works, to be built next to the downtown parking structure. Manley describes downtown Brea as the Siamese twin of City Hall, hopelessly interconnected to each other. One way to change that relationship is through divestment, if experiences such as the Birch Hills vote continue, Manley believes.

"I'm contemplating a lot of different things," says Manley. "I will always have my house and property here. Will I have the downtown? I don't know."

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LET IT BANG

fri/11/29

[COMEDY]

Watermelon Man
Gallagher

There are three reasons to go see Gallagher, the legendary standup comic of Sledge-O-Matic fame, when he comes to OC First and foremost, he is on what is billed as "The Last Smash Farewell Tour," so if you don't show up now, you may never get a chance to see him live again. Second, he is performing in the most intimate and appropriately named venue possible "The World Famous Gallagher's." Finally, he is among the most memorable guests on the *WTF With Marc Maron* podcast, ranking right up there with Barry Obama. Wait, there's a fourth thing: Gallagher is the spitting image of my pal Steve Faust. See? You must go.

The Last Smash Farewell Tour with Gallagher, comedic blues band Personal Satisfaction and Barney Singleton's Magic at Gallagher's Pub, 300 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach, (714) 951-9229; gallagherspubhb.com. 8 p.m. $25-$35. —MATT COKER

[CONCERT]

Wild Gift
X: Xmas

Among the best X moments ever was at the Coach House years ago, when their country-fried alter-ego band the Knitters performed. As the American folk standard "Rock Island Line" wound down, John Doe and Exene Cervenka delivered faster and faster vocal calls to their hot drummer's response on the snare—until it got beyond where fatigue and blinding sweat should break D.J. Bonebrake (It didn't.) Expect the pioneering LA punk trio, along with their fellow original member and blistering guitarist Billy Zoom, to create more Coach House magic as they pull from their vast catalog for an early Xmas present to fans. *Luche libre* mask-wearing Los Straitjackets' "mexcellent" surf-rock instrumentals set the mood.

X. Xmas with special guest Los Straitjackets at the Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, Ste. C, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 496-8930, thecoachhouse.com. 8 p.m., also Sat.-Sun. $42. —MATT COKER

sat/11/30

[COMEDY]

THE WAY WE WERE
Charles Phoenix

Holiday Jubilee

Charles Phoenix—otherwise known as purveyor/curator of all things retro, mid-century Google, kitsch, vintage and awful old-school food recipes—brings another kooky slideshow presentation on all the ways American humans of yesteryear feted the grand holidays. Phoenix shares details on all the holidays of the year, including Easter, the Fourth of July and Halloween, with his typical tacky humor and thorough knowledge while viewers appreciate the beautiful Kodachrome slides he's unearthed. (Not unlike the type of anthropological survey aliens will have on us thousands of years in the future, eh?) Marvel at this amazing showcase, then take the chance to meet Phoenix right after.

Charles Phoenix Holiday Jubilee Slideshow on Retro Row at the Art Theatre, 2025 E. Fourth St., Long Beach. (562) 438-5435; artthestrelongbeach.org. 11 a.m. $28. —AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

Trap Lord
A$AP Ferg

As a member of the A$AP Mob, A$AP Ferg (born Darold Durard Brown Ferguson Jr.) is among the leading rap luminaries who developed the trap/hip-hop sound. While the word *trap* describes the musical subgenre, Ferg has also applied it to a heavy work ethic of "hustling" various projects and businesses at a time. Before reaching fame with his musical prowess, the Harlem native launched his own clothing line while attending art school and meticulously writing songs, all with the same level of passion and focus to detail. And Ferg continues to impress with his recent *Floor Seats* EP, which he is currently touring to support. Don't miss another chance to see him on the mic!

A$AP Ferg at the House of Blues, 400 W. Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim. 8 p.m. $37.50. —AIMEE MURILLO

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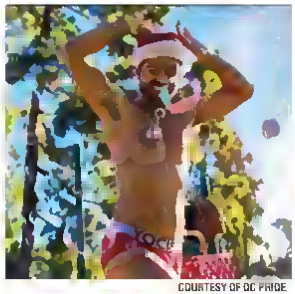
COURTESY OF OC PRIDE

[BENEFITS]

Gay Apparel

OC Pride Santa Speedo Run

Holy Sleigh Bells, OC Pride's big charity Santa Speedo Run is nearly here. Look, I don't know what you think we do, but we're a serious newspaper that covers serious stories about serious fundraising efforts such as this. We don't have time for cheap jokes referencing the "North Pole," "Little Saint Nick" or "carefully wrapped packages." And no, we won't ask if the song "Chestnuts Roasting Over an Open Fire" will be playing during the race. This is a charity event, people! Oh, after the race, there will be a Holiday Drag Brunch Show. (Note: Speedos are not required to enter; tutus and ugly Christmas sweaters are also acceptable.)

OC Pride Santa Speedo Run at Miles Square Regional Park, 16801 Euclid St., Fountain Valley; prideoc.com. 8 a.m. $10-$60. —ANTHONY PIGNATARO

mon/12/02

[AMUSEMENT PARKS]

SNOOPY CLAUS!

Knott's Merry Farm

At Knott's Berry Farm, it's time for some holiday cheer now that Halloween Haunt is packed away for another year. America's first theme park turns into a winter wonderland, complete with a nightly Christmas-tree-lighting ceremony as snow drifts down on Ghost Town. The festivities don't end there. Knott's Merry Farm is where park-goers can enjoy the Calico Christmas carolers and the classic *Merry Christmas Snoopy!* ice-skating show. Add delicious, themed treats with twinkling lights throughout the park and all "bah, humbug"s will be washed away, especially with admission prices that don't break the holiday-shopping piggy bank!

Knott's Merry Farm at Knott's Berry Farm, 8039 Beach Blvd., Buena Park, (714) 220-5200; www.knotts.com. 10 a.m. Through Jan. 5, 2020. $53-$84. —GABRIELSAN ROMÁN

tue/12/03

COURTESY OF MAINPLACE MALL

[FAMILYEVENTS]

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out, Kid!

Visits With Santa Claus

Does *A Christmas Story* Interactive Experience at MainPlace Mall have the front porch through which the Bumpuses' 785 smelly hound dogs passed on their way to the turkey? Of course. Does it have the leg lamp that came in a box marked "fragile" (pronounced "frah-geee-lay")? How couldn't it? Is there a frozen pole on which to affix your tongue? Okay, now you're pushing it. Opportunities abound for memorable Christmas selfies and professional photos with Santa on *A Christmas Story* sets created with the close participation of Warner Bros. Human visits with Santa continue daily through Dec. 24 (RSVP recommended), while pets can pose with St. Nick the evenings of Dec. 1 and 11. (Leave your smelly hounds at home, Bumpus!)

Visits With Santa Claus at MainPlace Mall, Level 1, Macy's Court, 2800 N. Main St., Santa Ana, www.shopmainplacemall.com. 10 a.m. Through Dec. 24. Walk-ups, free; RSVP requires photo-package purchase. —MATT COKER

[ARTS]

WINTER DELIGHTS

Winter Fantasy 2019

Though winter hasn't officially started, you can soak up the season early at this long-beloved tradition. The Sawdust Art Festival rolls out its annual Winter Fantasy, with more than 180 artisans and crafters showcasing their works across the Sawdust grounds' holiday-themed classes; art demos; a petting zoo; marionette shows; and a chance to sit on Santa Claus' lap. Even better, the fantasy continues with falling snow to play in (sadly, not for making snowballs with), live entertainment, tasty treats and drinks, and even a complimentary pottery-wheel experience in which you get to take home your own ceramic creation. Check the online website for schedules of classes, demonstrations and bands throughout the festival run.

Winter Fantasy 2019 at Sawdust Art Festival, 935 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach, sawdustartfestival.org. 10 a.m. Through Dec. 22. $4-$12. —AIMEE MURILLO

wed/12/04

COURTESY OF SEGERSTROM CENTER FOR THE ARTS

[PERFORMING ARTS]

Leftover Laughs

Dixie's Tupperware Party

Tupperware Brands—maker of fine plastic food-storage containers—says that it "has made a difference in the lives of women around the world by offering an independent business opportunity" for more than 60 years. While undoubtedly true, this is also ironic, given that one of the company's best and most famous purveyors is a man named Kris Andersson. Since 2008, Andersson has performed as fast-talking Alabama Tupperware saleslady Dixie Longate in *Dixie's Tupperware Party*, one of the longest-running off-Broadway shows ever. Often ribald but always funny, the show features heart-warming stories, audience participation and actual Tupperware for sale (girl's gotta make a living, you know).

Dixie's Tupperware Party at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, scfta.org. 7:30 p.m. Through Dec. 8. $39–$69. —ANTHONY PIGNATARO

[FAMILY EVENTS]

TRAIN KEPT A-ROLLIN'

Muzeo Express

Probably since the first years of the 20th century, when the Lionel corporation began selling electric toy trains, setting up a little railroad under the Christmas tree has been a holiday tradition. Like many, I grew up playing with a pre-war Lionel train chugging around my grandparents' Christmas tree. Thankfully, the Muzeo Museum and Cultural Center is again setting up its Muzeo Express, a beautiful and dynamic exhibit of model-train layouts and dioramas. This year's will include some of Walt Disney's old trains preserved by the Carolwood Foundation, other model trains courtesy of the Southern California Railway Museum, as well as other artifacts and exhibits.

Muzeo Express at Muzeo, 241 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim, (714) 765-6450; muzeo.org. 10 a.m. Through Jan. 26, 2020. $7–$10. —ANTHONY PIGNATARO

thu/12/05

[NIGHTLIFE]

KNIT WIT

Santa Hat & Ugly Sweater Party

We know you've got an ugly Christmas sweater hiding in your closet collecting dust, and now it's time to let it shine. All participants of tonight's Santa Hat & Ugly Sweater Party are encouraged to wear their ominiest knits in good humor and good faith (they make ugly sweaters for non-Christian holidays, too!) for tonight's event, hosted by Sound the Groove. The music-event production company brings local and under-the-radar musical talent to various stages as it travels around the country. For tonight's party at the Federal Underground, guests are encouraged to bring a donation for the Toys for Tots drive for children in need of holiday cheer this season. While the musical lineup is under wraps for now, expect it to be one of the jolliest holiday parties of the season!

Santa Hat & Ugly Sweater Party at the Federal Underground, 102 Pine Ave., Long Beach, (562) 435-2000, www.soundthegroove.com. 7 p.m. $15–$18. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

DAVE BARTON

[PANEL DISCUSSION]

Pogo!

Growing Up Punk Rock

When poet/X singer Exene Cervenka moved to Orange, Chapman University's English department should have hired her as a professor—or at least regular lecturer. Or maybe Stacy Russo should have recruited Exene for this panel discussion on growing up punk in Southern California. Announced participant Russo is the author of *We Were Going to Change the World. Interviews With Women from the 1970s & 1980s Southern California Punk Rock Scene*, and this talk is held in conjunction with the Chapman exhibit "Kids of the Black Hole: The First Two Decades of Punk in Orange County." Refreshments are served, and afterward, Eric Blair's 30-minute film on D.I. singer/Adolescents drummer Casey Royer screens across the hall.

Growing Up Punk Rock at Chapman University, Leatherby Libraries, Center for American War Letters Archives, 1 University Dr., Orange, (714) 532-6027, www.chapman.edu/library/index.aspx. 5:30 p.m. Free. —MATT COKER

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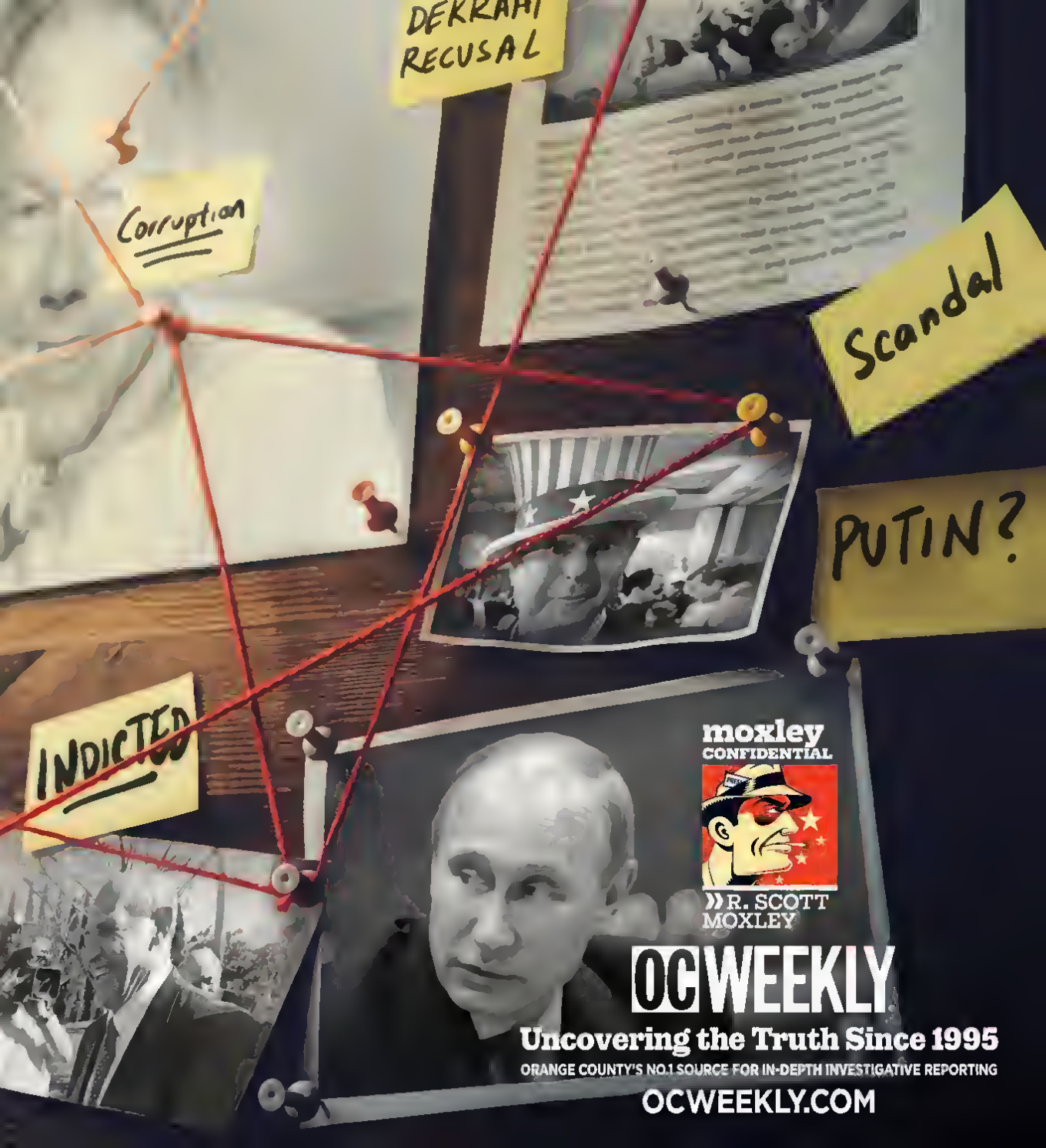
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PHOTOS BY EDWIN GOEI

Oeuf-ing Good

The French crepes and galettes at the new Délice Breton are great, but the omelet is otherworldly

BY EDWIN GOEI

Have you ever had an omelet so fluffy it feels weightless? Or one so moist and rich in the middle you'd swear it's filled with molten cheese even though you ordered it plain?

The omelet I had at Délice Breton in San Juan Capistrano was like this and more. It bore no resemblance to any omelet I've ever had. In fact, referring to it as an *omelet* seems as inadequate as calling Notre Dame a church. If there's a better name, it would be "soufflé omelet" or "puff omelet."

Délice Breton charges $10 for the basic model with no fillings. And you definitely want to eat it this way, at least for the first time, and maybe every time after that. Fillings are unbecoming and almost unnecessary. In Brittany, where this omelet is popular, it's not abnormal to have it for lunch or dinner, next to a salad.

In fact, this omelet is one of the main attractions of Mont Saint-Michel, an island in Northwestern France that is otherwise known for its gravity-defying monastery. A woman named Anne "Annette" Boutinat Poulard lived there in the late 1800s and invented the dish. Its success begat the restaurant and hotel called La Mere Poulard, which has been serving the specialty for the past 130 years.

Every French person of note from Monet to Coco Chanel to French Presidents Georges Pompidou, François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac ate these omelets. Paul Bocuse once declared, "Mère Poulard is France," and it's all because of how Poulard managed to transform the humble egg into something that exists in the ethereal plane.

It's rumored the secret is the length of time the eggs are whipped in a copper bowl before they're cooked over an open fire with lots of butter. How long are they whipped? According to David Lebovitz, who timed it while he surreptitiously watched one of the chefs there make it: five minutes. It takes that long to create the millions of microbubbles that leaven the final product like, well, a soufflé.

When I encountered the cloudlike structure of the omelet at Delice Breton, I realized the same amount of effort was taken. I also noticed that unlike an all-yellow Parisian omelet, it possessed a browned outer crust. The reason? It's not flipped until just before it goes on the plate. Also, it's huge—a girthy crescent that could double as a travel pillow. And I can't overstate how fluffy it was. As I cut in, the fork passed through it as though it were shampoo foam. It was not just light and airy, but also creamy, especially in the middle, where it takes on the texture of cheese fondue.

Not surprisingly, the people behind this new bistro—which is wedged among a bunch of health-care offices in the middle of nowhere—came from the same region as the omelets they cook. And because they're from there, Charlotte Le Villain, her nephew Jean-Michel Orhsenbein and Master Crepe Maker Audrey Marquer are meticulous in re-creating the food as though they never left.

The galettes are excellent, an edible lace doily that tastes of the buckwheat from which they're made. The best way to have one is to have it cocoon a vegan Breton sausage with stinky, stretchy cheese and onion confit. Eating it will give the impression that it's the analog to a New York hot dog, even if the sausage is made from Beyond Meat.

If it's cheese you want, there's a quiche packed with Swiss, Shropshire Blue, Tomme de Savoie and Mimolette. And since the quiche is nearly all *fromage* and very little egg, it's super-dense and super-rich. Eat a slice for breakfast, and you'll need nothing else the rest of the day.

For dessert, Marquier makes what's possibly the best crepes in the county. Never have I had one that was more delicate yet also wonderfully eggy and buttery. And in her banana-and-chocolate version, she shows how an OG master does it. Instead of just slicing the banana, Marquier mashes it into a paste that's spread underneath the crepe so that every bite has equal portions of pancake, fruit and chocolate sauce.

I do have to warn you: Once you've had this crepe, you'll never again settle for lesser ones with lazily cut bananas and carelessly slathered Nutella. Unfortunately, it will also be the same for any omelets you have after you've had the ones here—unless, that is, you're planning a trip to Mont Saint-Michel.

DÉLICE BRETON
31451 Rancho Viejo Rd., Ste. 103, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 503-1577, www.delicebreton.com. Open Tues.-Sat., 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Sun., 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Dishes, $6-$14. No alcohol.

WHAT THE ALE
» TODD MATHEWS

Perfectly Paired Keg Killers

We Olive and Wine Bar inside the OC Mix at South Coast Collection (or SOCO—jeez, any more names you'd like to add?) is the ideal spot to stop for a drink (or drinks) after work. Besides delicious tapas, cheeses, wines and beers to enjoy there, as well as bottles of olives, olive oils and other goodies from small artisan producers to take home, Deb Glasgow and Phil Brooks' establishment just off the 405 freeway hosts special events to delight your palate.

Coming up is the final gathering of the monthly Perfect Pairings series, which features tastings of five wines, five olive oils and, from the Cheese Shop directly across from We Olive, five cheeses. Don't worry: Dishes and glasses are not simply tossed under your nose to enjoy until the check is slapped on the table. Rather, it's a culinary experience guided by Phil and his wine sommelier, Wes Kollar. In addition to the duo's knowledge about the unique wines the shop stocks, participants get exclusive discounts on bottles of vino and olive oil during the event.

While you await details on the series that will replace Perfect Pairings, you can swing by We Olive any Thursday for Kill the Keg. Order a pint of whichever new beer is on tap—at the special price of $5—and if your pour is the one that emptied the keg, you win a prize from We Olive's swag box.

Do you have the thirst, stomach and functioning liver to help break the current We Olive record? That would be three kegs in one night! Save up those fivers.

Whether or not it is special-event time, We Olive offers customers complimentary olive oil tastings, and you can order wine by the glass or in flights.

WE OLIVE & WINE BAR
at SOCO + the OC Mix, 3313 Hyland Ave., Costa Mesa, (949) 284-0609, weolive.com. Perfect Pairings, Dec. 3, 7-8:30 p.m. $35. RSVP required. Kill the Keg is every Thurs., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. No RSVP needed.

MATT COKER

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PATRICK MANALO

In Pie We Crust

Pop Pie Co.'s roasted-veggies-and-yellow-curry delight will win you over

THE ROOT
» CHARISMA MADARANG

If your parents were anything like mine, then you probably remember last-minute grocery-store runs to pick up a circular brick of pie for Thanksgiving. It was always one of three options—pecan, apple, maybe pumpkin—encased in a cage of plastic and aluminum with a white sticker label that seemed to announce that no, your parents didn't cook anything, and, yes, this pie cost exactly $6.99, you're welcome, now please pass the gravy.

While those days still exist—and honestly, I hope they always do (that was some damn-good pie)—the business of making pie has become a bit more involved. Last year, *The New York Times* dedicated an entire spread to making homemade, from-scratch pies, and more bakeries than ever are taking pride in pies in which everything from the crust to the filling is from fresh, organic ingredients without a hint of corn syrup.

I thought about this as I stepped into Pop Pie Co.'s carefully curated shop. From the neon "In Pie We Crust" signage to the meticulously stacked cardboard boxes covering the main wall, it's clear what you're in for. You won't find bricks in plastic cages here! The store deals in both sweet and savory handheld pies fresh from the kitchen.

Founded by Steven Torres and chef Gan Suebsarakham, Pop Pie Co. is an extension of their mini phenomenon that first started in San Diego's University Heights, where lines regularly creeped out the door. Pop Pie Co.'s newly minted Costa Mesa location on 17th Street once housed the similar concept Pie Not. And while the specialties here are savory, handheld meat pies—the Green Hog and Cheese, with Torres' mother's own tomatillo recipe and heaping stacks of tender, braised pork shoulder in every forkful, is really a dream—the vegetable-forward options are almost as good.

The vegetarian mushroom-risotto pizza pot pie is made with a generous helping of perfectly cooked mushrooms, olives and onions—supple, not soggy—and a light use of ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. The crust, which is painstakingly hand-rolled layer by layer, is hearty and buttery, but flaky, too. Upon looking at the robust, compact pie, you might think you're in for a knockout nap after, but the dish is surprisingly light.

If you're keen on something vegan, luckily the sole option is done superbly. Coated in an almond-milk wash, the roasted-veggies-and-yellow-curry pie houses a torrent of spices and herbs, with an aroma that'll cause anyone in your near vicinity to crane their necks in your direction. Cauliflower is roasted alongside soft, smoky sweet potatoes, mushrooms and squash, and coconut milk creates the base soaking up the curry spices and enveloping the whole thing in a creamy layer.

There's also an excellent vegan apple crumble pie, but if you can manage it, try the key lime, which cuts like silk and finds that elusive balance between tart and sweet.

And for those who plan on stopping by the supermarket on the way to Thanksgiving dinner, Pop Pie Co. also offers freshly made pecan and pumpkin pies. It'll cost you more than $6.99, but I guarantee none of your fellow dinner guests will mind.

POP PIE CO
270 E. 17th St., Ste. 17, Costa Mesa,
(949) 524-3015, poppieco.com

LISA HU CHEN

Times Are A-Changing—for the Better

The Recess Room adds lunchtime hours and delights

There have been times when we wanted to head to the Recess Room for a midday meal but forgot it was only open for dinner service. Turns out we weren't the only ones who thought this way. As of early November, operating hours changed for the better. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, chef Nikko Marquez and his Fountain Valley crew are ready to feed your need for their modern Asian fare. Offering a quick-service setup as most are short on time, diners need only browse the chalkboard wall upon arrival, then place their request and pay the host, then claim a table indoors or along the patio. Ranging from $9 for a Korean barbecue tofu and kimchi bowl to $16 for one sizzling meat fest, there's enough variety to please—particularly if you don't count calories.

In lieu of day drinking, inquire about the agua fresca, which changes daily. Our tall blend of fresh strawberries, pineapple and rose water would complement the flavors we'd encounter while grazing the lunch menu. Pickled cucumbers and crispy shallots kept Thai barbecue pork from being a one-note dish. A plentiful farmers' market salad evolves with what's in season, on the day I visited, the mix included golden beets, Asian pear and watermelon radish. Opt for a side of protein or choose among the secondary leafy greens, featuring tandoori chicken tossed in yogurt-herb dressing.

EAT & DRINK THIS NOW

» ANNE MARIE PANORINGAN

Folks not familiar with Recess might consider the hearty "Fili" cheesesteak (a nod to the chef's Filipino heritage) as their gateway meal. Provolone and grilled onions guarantee a messy good time as they mingle with beef. Also worthy of your attention: an upgraded bone-marrow burger, featuring a compound butter infused with the good stuff that evenly melted over our grass-fed patties and bacon jam. Pair it with taters spiced with tamarind, galangal, kaffir lime and ginger. Or go ooey gooey-style, and they'll come blanketed in a velvety, classic Mornay sauce.

However, the Most Valuable Platter award belongs to Marquez's sizzling riff on steak and eggs. Cognac black pepper and soy sauce flavor an albondigas meatball, longanisa sausage and filet mignon, while baguette rounds add necessary carbs and fried egg lends a yolk-y ooze. Per co-owner Viet Pham, the skillet brings international flavors together in a combo similar to the Vietnamese dish banh mi chao. Sent to the table still steaming, it'll satisfy your carnivore cravings *and* make you the envy of this dining room.

THE RECESS ROOM
18380 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, (714) 377-0398, www.therecessroom.com.

Hi-Time Wine Cellars

2019: Top Cabernet Under $20

NINE HATS 2016
CABERNET SAUVIGNON
COLUMBIA VALLEY
$19.95 [#247940]

Nine Hats was a conception that began back in 2007 with one wine-- a red blend that was stirring in quality, approachability and deliciousness. It was crafted with impeccable attention to detail and the benefit of top-quality grapes... **and people loved it!** The wines formed into this original blend were declassified juice coming from Long Shadows wine portfolio, a collection of seven ultra-premium Columbia Valley wines showcasing the viticultural excellence of the growing region. Along with some of the best grapes grown within the region, Long Shadows has tapped some of the best winemakers from around the world (Gilles Nicault, Randy Dunn, John Duval, Michel Rolland and Philippe Melka), so there is no wonder as to why Nine Hats was so successful. For this 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, several vineyard sites throughout Horse Heaven Hills and the Wahluke Slope were selected to source the fruit that provides its depth and complexity.

Aged eleven months in French oak prior to bottling, this wine scored **90 points from Wine Spectator**! Vibrant aromatics of black cherry, espresso beans and bittersweet chocolate introduce this richly structured Cabernet Sauvignon. It is a multi-layered wine with expressive flavors of black and red berries complemented by notes of savory spice. Its luscious mouthfeel persists across a lengthy finish.

See more of our Top Wines of 2019 at hitimewine.net

250 Ogle Street • Costa Mesa
(behind Staples on 17th St.)
949.650.8463 • www.hitimewine.net

COURTESY OF WILD EYE RELEASING

Black (Comedy) Friday Sale

Stuff *Danger God* with *Once Upon a Time . . . in Hollywood* in your stocking

BY MATT COKER

When I reviewed Quentin Tarantino's ninth motion picture ("Reliving the Good Ol' Bad Days in *Once Upon a Time . . . in Hollywood*," Aug. 8), I hoped to hold back my blabbing enough so there would be room to direct my lone reader to a related documentary. Alas, I failed. Joe O'Connell's *Danger God*

However, with *Once Upon a Time . . . in Hollywood* being released Tuesday on digital and Dec. 10 on DVD, Blu-ray and 4K Ultra HD, as well as *Danger God* still being available on DVD and Blu-ray, I can now recommend picking up both as stocking stuffers.

Brad Pitt's Cliff Booth, the stuntman in Q's joint, is partly based on Gary Kent, O'Connell's documentary subject who, like his fictional counterpart, had a run-in with the Charlie Manson Family at Spahn Ranch. By then, Kent was deep into what would become a 50-year career of falling, burning, jumping, fighting and getting real-life broken in more than 100 movies in the 1960s and '70s, mostly indies and B-movies.

Kent's mother recognized early on in Walla Walla, Washington, that her son was a daredevil, and he perfected the art of running into solid things at high speeds while playing on the high-school football team. But he was also a theater nerd whose interest, after a stint in the military, led him to Corpus Christi, Texas. While working with a theater company there, he met his first wife, Joyce, who would become the mother of his three children.

With zero prospects awaiting Kent, he nonetheless announced to his young family that they were moving to Hollywood so he could pursue an acting career. But he only mustered extra and stunt work, which he did around drama classes and acting in plays at night. "Staggering home is no way to conduct a marriage," concedes Kent, who eventually divorced Joyce. (He later married a co-star.)

Before Kent landed lead parts and directing gigs, he took a role that had him riding a chopper as a Hells Angel, even though he'd never before ridden a bike. He wound up crashing and breaking a rib before being driven to the hospital by the movie's producer, Dick Clark (of *American Bandstand*, *The $25,000 Pyramid* and *Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve* fame). Kent's description of the Spahn Movie Ranch proves that Tarantino's depiction was spot-on. Hippie girls watched actors and stuntmen work on the Simi Valley property, then begged for their craft services lunches.

He tells of the incident that inspired a prominent scene in *Once Upon a Time . . . in Hollywood*. Tarantino's movie has Cliff discovering a tire had been purposely flattened on his car while parked at the ranch, and he orders a male hippie to fix it . . . or else. Kent reports it was a dune buggy that served as a movie project's camera car that broke down, which prompted Patricia Krenwinkel to offer to have Manson, who she swore was a "great mechanic," fix it—for $70 in advance. When the film crew arrived the next day, the dune buggy had not been repaired and Manson was ordered to fix it . . . or else. Charlie jumped into the work right away.

The *Danger God* subject, people he's lived and worked with, and admirers have plenty more stories that are entertaining, uplifting, enlightening, jaw-dropping and heartbreaking. Despite some serious recent health scares, the 86-year-old was still with us as this story went to print. To his credit, O'Connell presents a warts-and-all portrait, although he can't mask his deep respect for Kent.

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

Special Screenings

» MATT COKER

***Santa Sangre* (*Holy Blood*).** In Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1989 surreal shocker, a former circus performer (his son Axel Jodorowsky) leaves a mental institution for the arms of his mother (Blanca Guerra)—although she has no arms because her philandering husband cut them off. The son supplies "her arms" as she seeks revenge. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri.–Sat., 11 p.m.; Sun., 8 p.m. $7.50–$10.50.*

From Ashes to Eden. An Immigrant's Story. Jahangir Golestan-Parast's 2018 documentary follows Iranian-born American Amir Dialameh, who tries to rehabilitate a hillside in the country's largest city park in the midst of racial and cultural injustice. An audience Q&A with the director follows. *Bowers Museum of Cultural Art; bowers.org. Sat., 1:30 p.m. $10–$15.*

Fantastic Fungi. It's an encore presentation of Louie Schwartzberg's new documentary about an organism that feeds you, heals you, reveals secrets of the universe and could help save the planet. *Art Theatre, (562) 438-5435. Sun., 11 a.m. $9–$10.*

When Harry Met Sally . . . It's a 30th-anniversary screening of Rob Reiner's 1989 rom-dramedy about platonic pals (Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal) who keep running into each other. They may become more than friends after a climactic New Year's Eve party. *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Sun. & Tues. 4 & 7 p.m. $10–$13.25.*

The Color Purple. Frida Volunteer of the Month Leonardo Ostergren chose for everyone's viewing Steven Spielberg's 1985 drama that was adapted from Alice Walker's novel. A black Southern woman (Golden Globe winner Whoopi Goldberg) struggles to find her identity after suffering abuse from her father (Adolph Caesar), her husband (Danny Glover) and others over four decades. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sun., 5 p.m., Mon.–Tues., 8 p.m. $7.50–$10.50.*

Faustina. Love and Mercy. Shot in the U.S., Poland and Lithuania, Michal Kondrat's recent docu-drama tells the story of Faustina Kowalska, who says Jesus appeared before her in 1931 and asked her to paint his image with the phrase "Jesus, I trust in you." *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Mon., 7 p.m. $15.*

The Best of Enemies. In Robin Bissell's historical bio-drama from earlier this year, civil-rights activist Ann Atwater (Taraji P. Henson) and KKK leader C.P. Ellis (Sam Rockwell) face off over school integration in 1971 Durham, North Carolina. *Fullerton Public Library, (714) 738-6327. Wed., 6 p.m. Free.*

Gundam 40th Anniversary Celebration *Char's Counterattack.* Mobile suit pilots Amuro and Char, who fought together against Titans after the Jion's independency war, must face each other in a fateful duel in which life on Earth lies in the balance. The screening event includes Anime NYC 2019 footage and an exclusive interview with Yoshiyuki Tomino, the creator of the Gundam anime franchise. Subtitled in English. *Various theaters, www.fathomevents.com. Thurs., Dec. 5, 7 p.m. $15.*

***La Befana Vien di Notte* (*The Legend of the Christmas Witch*).** Italian Movie Night presents Michele Soavi's 2018 comedy. An ordinary primary-school teacher (Paola Cortellesi) turns into a witch at night and brings gifts to the good kids. Subtitled in English. *Regency San Juan Capistrano, (949) 661-3456. Thurs., Dec. 5, 7 p.m. $10.*

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

Hope In the Hopeless

A sublime farewell from Lutz Bacher and an escape via Naida Osline

BY DAVE BARTON

While thankfully never specifically mentioned, No. 45 is all over late artist Lutz Bacher's four-part multimedia installation "Blue Wave," located in different parts of UC Irvine's Contemporary Arts Center and University Art Galleries.

The title piece is a 14-minute, two-channel HD video projection of a blue tarp, rippling deliciously in the wind around the time of the 2018 mid-term election. Calming, even with the artist's jittery camera work and accompanying loud traffic sounds, it's a readymade visual, in the Duchamp slap-your-name-on-something-already-existing-and-call-it-art meaning, as well as a joyous conceptual vision of what was happening in Congress at the time.

As a photo, there's nothing overtly fascinating about 2018's *Rocket*, a lobby-sized color picture on vinyl of a dismantled rocket lying on a track. In this day of phallocentric politicians bragging about the size of their junk, while limiting women's access to birth control or talking wildly about vague "space forces," it reads as hopeful. Not as a deconstructed America—though that reading also works—but as a bracingly backhanded symbol of anti-patriarchy.

Moskva (2019)—"Moscow" in Russian—involves 96 digital pigment prints of rearranged texts taken from spy novels that are hanging on the walls, sometimes on top of one another, obscuring the pages underneath or lying on the floor as if leftovers from some sort of frenzied search. Echoing William S. Burroughs' cut-up technique, its lurid xeroxed sex scenes obsessed with pubic hair and swollen "ruby fruit," intermingling with grade-Z dialogue and intermittent Russian words, makes for a campy read. As mentioned in organizer Monica Majoli's thoughtful curator notes, the installation echoes the redactions in the Mueller Report, but there's also a smidgen of psychopathology, as if someone absorbed in conspiracies has tried to lay out their cockeyed evidence in drips and drabs as they attempt to make confused sense of it.

Step into an otherwise-closed utility closet in the same gallery and experience Bacher's 2018-2019 *Modules*: one desk, one monitor and two hours of videos about the artist's process, meant to be experienced at random. The 15 minutes I watched involved smoke machines in a small space, filling the room with white clouds until everything disappears from view, with the only thing left the voice of the artist. It's a sublime, entirely unintentional goodbye.

COURTESY OF NAIDA OSLINE

The short run of "Naida Osline: Chasing Clouds" at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art closes Friday, so it may already be gone by the time that you read this.

But I hope not because it's one of the best shows of the year.

Eight prints of scanned plants and flowers floating in a pitch-black background are the first images of the show. *Florescence* features Frankenstein vegetations created by the artist from parts of other plants, insects, animals and completely artificial ephemera, with vivid colors popping amid odd hybrid greenery. The theme of renegade nature builds in the related *Untitled Series* of chromogenic prints, with its images of imaginary Cronenbergian parasites budding from the human body. Like skin tags with teeth, the eruptions from hairy chests, belly buttons infected with crawling tendrils and creases of flesh red-rimmed by ... *shudder*. The less said about these effective monstrosities the better, but then the horrible/erotic continues in *Poppyhead*, a quintet of sliced opium seed pods, each oozing pizzy sap, with the heads of the plants in a background of cloudy sky.

That overinflated respect for mind-altering chemicals is further suggested in Osline's oversized *Visionary Plants*—photographs of jimsonweed, cannabis, somniferum, magic mushrooms and the very poisonous Angel's Trumpet—some hovering over cityscapes, seas and mountains like ancient gods. *Tattooed Tobacco*'s photographs of dangling brown leaves imprinted with images of slaves, Christopher Columbus and barbed-wire hearts (a cogent symbol for addiction) are exquisite. Lit from behind, they resemble stained glass, with some evoking dirtied lungs, others a designer chrysalis waiting for a tumor to emerge. Likewise, the show's titular exhibit of people vaping: Are these photos of a seance or a funeral—or just pretty pictures of people destroying their health? All three? Some eyes are opened, others closed, the individuals in the portraits—oval-shaped in a way that resembles Victorian mirrors—caught in moments of idyllic intoxication. (Strip the color from them, and they'd vaguely look like fanciful postmortem photographs, the individual visages enveloped in ectoplasmic shrouds.)

The beauty of Osline's vision is that she brings to the forefront the entire reason for art in the first place: a desire for the new, the beautiful and the transcendent, whether it's an escape from the mind, the body or just one's social circumstances. Her phantasmagorical work, rooted in the (un)real, offers us the following advice. If you can't find it, retreat to your imagination, manipulating the imperfect reality you've been handed—remaking, tweaking and transforming by any means necessary—until it becomes what you need.

"BLUE WAVE: LUTZ BACHER" at UC Irvine's University Art Gallery and Contemporary Arts Center Gallery, 712 Arts Plaza, Irvine, (949) 824-9854, uag.arts.uci.edu. Open Tues.-Sat., noon-6 p.m. Through Dec. 14. Free (though you do have to pay for parking)

"NAIDA OSLINE: CHASING CLOUDS" at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, 117 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana, (714) 667-1517, www.occca.org. Open Thurs.-Fri., Nov. 28-29, noon-5 p.m. (Holiday hours may differ, so check the website before heading over.) Free

ARTSOVERLOAD

» AIMEE MURILLO

Nov. 29-Dec. 5

GOLDEN ROAD 5K. A fun run, followed by a beer after-party. Dogs are welcome to participate, and proceeds from basket sales go toward Wags n' Walks and Barks of Love. Fri., 9 a.m. $25. 21+. Golden Road Brewery, 2210 E. Orangewood Ave., Anaheim, (657) 236-4366, www.facebook.com/onmarkrunners.

***ANNE OF GREEN GABLES*.** The musical is based on the beloved book about the misadventures of a young, newly adopted orphan girl. Fri., 8 p.m., Sat. 3 & 8 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m. Through Dec. 29. $42-$46. Channel Theater, 5522 E. La Palma Ave., Anaheim, (888) 465-4212, nhennetheater.com.

THE MINDFULNESS EXPO. Speakers, meditation, yoga classes and vendors aim to help you learn and maintain spiritual enlightenment. Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m. $35. $49. Anaheim Convention Center, 800 W. Katella Ave., Anaheim. (714) 765-4311, mindfulnessexpo.com.

PATCHWORKSANTA ANA. More than 200 vendors will present their handmade arts and crafts; plus, there are workshops, classes and live music. Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Downtown Santa Ana Artists Village, Second Street and Sycamore, Santa Ana. downtownsantaana.com.

"A FINE ROMANCE: IMAGES OF LOVE IN CLASSIC AMERICAN ILLUSTRATION". The collection is themed around love and romance as seen in mid-20th century magazines. Open Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Through May 2, 2020. Free. Hilbert Museum, 167 N. Atchison St., Orange. (714) 516-5980, www.hilbertmuseum.com.

HEALTHY HAPPY HOUR. A presentation on how to live on a healthy, nutritious diet, featuring farm-to-table ingredients and helpful samples. Tues., 7 p.m. Free with RSVP. Cherry Hills Market at Pacific City, 21011 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach, Ste. 106, (714) 587-2670, cherryhillsmarket.com.

UGLY SWEATER TEA PARTY. This weekly tea includes raffle prizes, samples and an award of free tea service given to whoever dons the most tasteless holiday sweater. Thurs., 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Through Dec. 18. Free, tea and food sold separately. Tea & Teacups Tea Room, 18154 Imperial Hwy., Yorba Linda, (714) 572-3825, www.facebook.com/teaandteacups/.

***SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE* LIVE.** This showcase features professional dancers who've appeared on the popular FOX television program. Thurs., Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m. $39.50-$69.50. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2700, citynationalgroveofanaheim.com.

@RAINPHOTO

Oi! Oi! Oi!

The Divided play punk-rock love songs for the working class

BY STEVE DONOFRIO

The Divided have all the makings of a solid street-punk band. With thick, crunchy guitar riffs, precise, pounding drums; and plenty of powerful group vocals, their sound is reminiscent of classic working-class "oi!" groups. But their debut record, *World You're Living In*, which was released last month through Huntington Beach's Hostage Records, also bears healthy doses of melodic hardcore and even some bluesy rock. As a whole, the album harks back to a distinctively heavy OC punk sound of the 1990s as well as takes a creative step forward for the outfit.

Guitarists Pat Hall and Brian Celi, drummer Noah Lysek, and legendary baritone Raybo are well-seasoned from their years with the prolific punk outfit Bonecrusher. A self-described "working-class band," their blistering street-punk sound and class-conscious lyrics made them a staple in OC since forming in 1992. Since then, they've released 10 full-length albums and even more singles and EPs.

Bonecrusher has undergone numerous lineup changes over the years, one of the most notable of which happened when front man Raybo moved to Hawaii. "I was living in the islands," he explains. "I moved there for a couple of years and started surfing. And [then] I came home, and I wanted to rock. I was looking for guys to play with, so I went back to [the Bonecrusher] guys. But music just wasn't coming out the way I wanted it, and I kind of lost contact with them. Then Brian called me up and said, 'Let's form a band.'" Thus, the Divided were born.

The Divided's sound is significantly more diverse than Bonecrusher's. The new band, which now includes Chris Lohman on bass, mix together a variety of influences without losing an ounce of punk urgency. Raybo's voice ranges from an intimidating growl to a gruff, soulful croon. Melodic guitar lines reminiscent of late-'90s/early-2000s groups such as the Unseen and early Anti-Flag add another layer. And hearty group vocals on choruses and even simple "oh"s encompass the spirit of such bands as the Angelic Upstarts and early Dropkick Murphys.

"Noah does these primal screams, and it sounded so good that we all started doing it," Raybo says. "So we really hit the backing vocals in the studio, and it worked well."

Equal parts technically proficient and passionate, it's fair to say that Lysek is the band's engine. The percussionist plays heavy-handed rolls, flavorful fills and thrashing beats, all at a breakneck pace. Singing while drumming with such energy is no simple feat, but Lysek is a master. He even filled the front man role for Bonecrusher while Raybo was off the mainland. "I can't stop talking about him," Raybo says. "I love him."

The band were quick to hop in the studio after forming just more than a year ago, which Raybo says adds to the resulting album's energy. "It's urgent," he explains. "We had to get in as soon as we could, before we split up or something else happens."

Perhaps the biggest change for the Divided is their lyrical content. Bonecrusher has always been a political band, as evidenced by 1998's *Working for Nothing* and 1999's *Problems In the Nation*. But the Divided write much more personal songs. "I'm so fed up with politics and bullshit like that," Raybo says. "I just sing about family and having good times. I try to uplift people with music, instead of just going up there and playing a set and not giving a shit. I write songs about the world around me and what I see."

This approach has led Raybo to something he says he'd never imagined: singing punk-rock love songs. When his fiancée, Wendy, was diagnosed with cancer, he felt frustration, stress and a plethora of other emotions, which he dealt with in the best way he knew how. "Music hits when you're in ruin or when something's happening in your life, and you've just got to write about it," he explains.

Fortunately, the two are looking forward to healthier days. "She is just beautiful," he says. "She's fighting it, and she's coming back from it, so I'm truly amazed."

While some songs on *World You're Living In*, such as the pleading, heartfelt "Suicide," are a clear lyrical departure from Bonecrusher's output, a timeless sense of angst is retained throughout the album. Tracks such as "Working Man" show the band haven't forgotten their class-conscious roots. In fact, by releasing this album through Hostage Records, the Divided are celebrating a bit of their past: Bonecrusher's '96 EP *Animal*, on which most members of the Divided played, was the label's first release, and *World You're Living In* is its 75th.

Before embarking on a tour through Europe next fall, the Divided are working on material for another full-length. And you can be sure that it'll be more of what Raybo describes as "songs that make you move. It's a certain beat that drives, and when it hits you, it gets up in your neck. You can feel it in your backbone when it's turned up loud—especially loud."

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Friday

D.I. RESIDENCY NIGHT, WITH NARCOLEPTIC YOUTH, THE HAJJ, ROOM 304, A RAZORBLADE ROMANCE 8 p.m., $15, 21+. The Doll Hut, 107 S. Adams St., Anaheim, (562) 277-0075; www.worldfamousdollhut.com

KATASTRO 8 p.m. $15, all ages. The Constellation Room, 2503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; observatoryoc.com

MARK GREGORY & THE RECOND LAW BAND 8 p.m. $10, all ages. Campus Jax, 3950 Campus Dr., Newport Beach, (949) 261-6270; campusjax.com

BOCCI 8 p.m., $18-$68, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; observatoryoc.com

Saturday

CHICANO SOUL LEGENDS, FEATURING LITTLE ANTHONY AND THE IMPERIALS; MALO, SUNNY OZUNA. 7:30 p.m., $31-$224, all ages. Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 704-2500, hondacenter.com.

EDOIE SPAGHETTI (OF THE SUPERSUCKERS), JD PINKUS (OF BUTTHOLE SURFERS) 8 p.m., $15, 21+. Gallagher's Pub, 300 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach, (714) 951-9229; gallagherspubhb.com.

EMO NIGHT BROOKLYN 8 p.m., $12.50-$21, all ages. The Observatory, observatoryoc.com.

THE FABULOUS NOMADS 9 p.m., $10, all ages. Campus Jax; campusjax.com

HEYDEON, DAISE 9 p.m., $10, 21+. La Santa, 223 E. Third St., Santa Ana, (657) 231-6005, lasantaoc.com.

BOCAL PSYCHO VOL. VI, WITH THE PEABRAINS, ZOMBILLYZ, THE AUTOPSIES 8 p.m., $5, 21+. The Doll Hut; www.worldfamousdollhut.com.

THE SPOOKY, INFAMOUS STIFFS; LOOSE THUCKS 8 p.m., $5, 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; alexsbar.com

STORM LARGE, HOLIDAY OROEAL 8 p.m., $38-$100, all ages. Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-4646, thebarclay.org

BOICIDE SILENCE, IMPENDING ODOM, PATHOLOGY, ANNEOONIA, THE MENOENHALL EXPERIMENT 6:30 p.m., $20, all ages. Chain Reaction, 1652 W. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim, (714) 535-6067, allages.com.

Sunday

AN UNFORGETTARLE NAT KING COLE CHRISTMAS, STARRING EVAN TYRONE MARTIN 3 p.m., $15-$47, all ages. La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, 14900 La Mirada Blvd., La Mirada, (714) 994-6310, lamiradatheatre.com.

AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD; QUIET FEAR, BLODO OF LIGHT, SCALP 7:30 p.m., $10, all ages. Chain Reaction, allages.com

BO NAPOLEON 6 p.m., free, all ages. The Slidebar Rock N Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-2233; slidebarfullerton.com

CORRUPTED YOUTH, POLICE SH*T, RTREAT THREAT, THE OELETED 8 p.m., $7, 21+. Alex's Bar, alexsbar.com.

CRUCIAL STAR 8 p.m., $15, all ages. Constellation Room, observatoryoc.com

MANHEIM STEAMROLLER CHRISTMAS 7 p.m., $59-$139, all ages. Segerstrom Hall, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, scfta.org

THE RUSSELL WATTS MEMORIAL SHOW, FEATURING SEPTIC SLAUGHTER, CARNAL BLISS, OEADLOCK 8 p.m., free, 21+. The Doll Hut, www.worldfamousdollhut.com.

"SLEIGH BELLS SWING" HOLIDAY JAZZ PARTY, WITH ELENA GILLIAM & THE MICHAEL LEVANTRIO 6 p.m., $15-$45, all ages. Campus Jax, campusjax.com.

Monday

SLEEPY GONZALEZ; DELETE INSERT, IT'S BUTTER; CHARITY SWIM 8 p.m., free, 21+. The Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 526-4529, www.facebook.com/continentalroom.

Tuesday

BOSTON MANOR, MICROWAVE, HEART ATTACKMAN, SELFISH THINGS 7:30 p.m., $18, all ages. Chain Reaction, allages.com

BRENTANO STRING QUARTET 8 p.m., $29-$89, all ages. Samueli Theater, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, scfta.org

HAS KHALIL, APOLLO BEBOP 8:30 p.m., $7, 21+. The Continental Room, www.facebook.com/continentalroom.

ZERO PERIOD, WITH MALLEIGN, RADICAL DREAMER BAND, ELECTRIC MACHINES 9 p.m., free, 21+. Que Sera, 1923 E. Seventh St., Long Beach, (562) 599-6776; www.facebook.com/zero.period.event.

Wednesday

LILY & ULTRA Q 8 p.m., $10, all ages. Constellation Room, observatoryoc.com

MITCHELL TENPENNY, SEAFORTH 8 p.m., $25, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Ste. 337, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

NO OUH, A LIVE TRIBUTE TO NO DOUBT 8 p.m., $10, 21+. The Continental Room, www.facebook.com/continentalroom.

SNOOP DOGG—I WANNA THANK ME TOUR 8 p.m., $69.75, all ages. The Observatory, observatoryoc.com.

Thursday, Dec. 5

"THE COCKTAIL SET," WITH THE TONY GUERRERO QUINTET & LISA BOOTH 8 p.m., $5, all ages. Campus Jax, campusjax.com

CROOKED TEETH, THE HOME TEAM 7:30 p.m., $12, all ages. Chain Reaction, allages.com

FROM INDIAN LAKES, DOEEN OF JEANS, YUMMM 8 p.m., $15, all ages. Constellation Room, observatoryoc.com.

THE HU., CROWN LANDS 8 p.m., $20-$25, all ages. The Observatory, observatoryoc.com

WEAPONS OF MASS CREATION; MADE BY CROOKS, MEMORY OEN. 8 p.m., $5, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039; wayfarercm.com.

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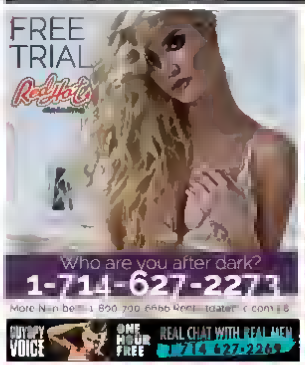
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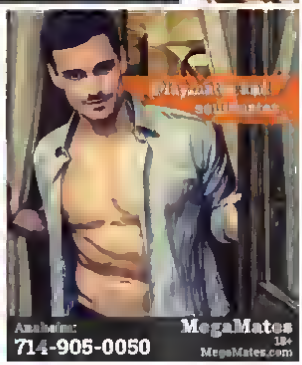
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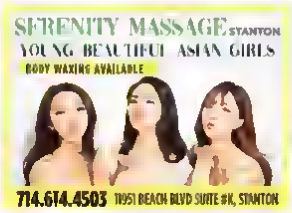

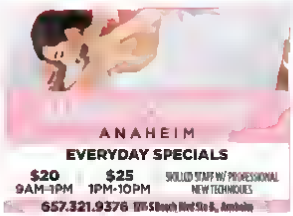

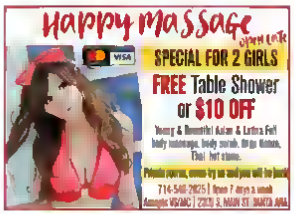

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Bluff Calls

I'm a heterosexual cis woman in a monogamous marriage. My husband and I have always struggled to connect sexually, mostly because he has extreme anxiety that makes doing anything new or different difficult. He's been in therapy since before I met him, but it doesn't seem to be helping much. His anxiety has caused him to shut down every sexual ask I've ever made because he's afraid he won't "do it right." He's a PIV-and-nothing-more kind of guy, but I'm not asking for varsity-level stuff, just boring things like talking about fantasies, a little role-play, staying in bed on a Sunday just to have sex, etc. I understand he has a right to veto sex acts, but isn't this all pretty basic, run-of-the-mill stuff? He'll still get his PIV, I just want there to be other elements before the PIV starts. Talking to him about this sends him into a depressive episode wherein I have to spend hours telling him he's not a bad person, so I've stopped bringing it up. This has gone on for so long that I've lost all interest in sex. My libido, which used to be very high, has vanished. Whenever he wants sex, I do it—but I dread it. Do you have any ideas on how I can navigate this topic with my husband so he doesn't shut down? How can I make him understand that it's okay to experiment sexually and it will be okay if it's not perfect?

Lost And So Sad

You're going to have to call your husband's bluff, LASS, and power through the predictable meltdown. That means raising—again—your unhappiness with your sex life, explaining your need for some pre-PIV intimacy and play, informing him this is no longer a desperate request but a non-negotiable demand, and then refusing to shift into caregiver mode when his depressive episode starts.

I'm not suggesting your husband's anxiety and depression are an act, LASS, or that being made aware of your unhappiness isn't a trigger. But if depressive episodes get your husband out of conversations he'd rather avoid, then his subconscious could be weaponizing those depressive episodes. And if you shift to caregiver mode every time, then your grievances will never be addressed, much less resolved. So even if it means spending an extremely unpleasant evening, weekend or few weeks with him, you're going to have to raise the issue and refuse to reassure your husband. Line up whatever support you think he might need before you make your stand—you could also make your stand during a couples counseling session—and give him maybe one "You're not a bad person, really!" and then refuse to back down.

And when he shuts down, LASS, it will be his therapist's job to pry him back open, not yours.

And the sex you're currently having? The sex you dread and don't enjoy? The sooner you stop having it, LASS, the sooner your husband will come to understand that he's going to have to give a little (so very little!) if he wants to have sex at all. If and when he does, then you can borrow a page from the varsity-level kinkster handbook. *Take baby steps.*

I'm a bisexual trans woman living in Europe. A couple of months ago, I began an amazing relationship with a woman who works as an escort. For a while, everything was as good as it gets, until I said something inconsiderate about her job and she took offense. We were having a conversation about "what we were" (girlfriends? lovers? partners?) and any rules we'd like the other to observe, and I said I'd rather not see her after she'd been with a client; I'd rather wait until the next day. She took this as me thinking her job was "dirty," which was absolutely not my intention. I explained that I'd spent 10 years in open relationships and it was just a habit I was used to. (If you sleep with someone else, go home, take a shower, sleep off the emotions, see you tomorrow.) She said that her clients were not lovers, it's completely different, and it would make seeing her complicated, as we work different hours. I immediately realized how she was right and said so. She was aloof for a few days afterward, and she eventually told me that she didn't feel like she could be with someone who understood so little about her job. I pleaded with her to give me a second chance, and she agreed that we could carry on seeing each other. But she remained distant, canceling plans and not replying, until she eventually told me that she was just too scared of getting hurt because it's happened so many times before. I was absolutely shattered. I spent the next few days drinking in bed and licking my wounds. After a couple of days, I started going about my life again. And soon enough, she started texting me. I don't know how to reply to her. If she has changed her mind, then I'll date her again in a heartbeat, given how freaking amazing she is. But if she's just (kind of inconsiderately) making conversation, then I can see myself getting my heart broken all over again. Any advice?

Tearful Escort's Ex Getting Really Lonely

If you two couldn't handle a simple misunderstanding, TEEGRL, how are you going to resolve a serious conflict? Or forgive a profound betrayal? You know, the kind of shit people in LTRs do?

Actually, I'm being unfair. You seem perfectly capable of handling this misunderstanding, TEEGRL, it was your ex-whatever-she-was (girlfriend? lover? partner?) who wasn't able to handle it. But in fairness to her, sex workers are often shamed by romantic partners who pretended, at the outset of the relationship, to be fine with their jobs. Your comment about not wanting to see her after she was with a client could reasonably be interpreted as whorephobic. But your explanation was reasonable, and your ex-whatever she was, if she were a reasonable person, should have been able to see that.

And perhaps she is reasonable, TEEGRL. Maybe she started texting you about casual stuff because she feels bad about pulling away and sees now that she overreacted. To determine whether that's the case, you'll have to risk asking the dreaded direct question: "Hey, it's great to hear from you! I'd love to pick up where we left off, if you're still interested. Are you? Please let me know!"

SavageLove

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